

REMARKS

This amendment is offered in response to the Office Action of January 30, 2012.

It is respectfully submitted that this amendment will require neither a new search nor substantial reconsideration.

The Office Action rejected Claims 21, 28, and 31-33 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by the Ausnit '373 reference (U.S. Patent No. 4,691,373). Similarly, the Office Action rejected Claims 22 and 23 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over the Ausnit '373 reference in view of the Kettner reference; rejected Claims 24-26, 29-30 and 34-48 as being obvious over the Ausnit '373 reference; rejected Claim 27 as being obvious over the Ausnit '373 reference in view of the Ausnit '856 reference (U.S. Patent No. 3,959,856); rejected Claims 39-46 as being obvious over the Ausnit '373 reference in view of the Machacek reference; and rejected Claims 47-51 as being obvious over the Ausnit '373 reference in view of the Schneider reference (U.S. Patent No. 6,609,828).

The Office Action has apparently cited the phantom portion of Figure 11 of the Ausnit '373 reference for disclosing attachment flanges 79, 80 which are bent so as to extend away from the plane of separation of the fastener. It appears that all of the rejections are based upon this citation. However, the bent portions of the flanges of the phantom portion of Figure 11 of the Ausnit '373 reference are not aligned with the rib profiles 72. In other words, the plane of the bent attachment flanges 79, 80 (as shown in phantom) does not pass through the rib profiles and is removed therefrom. This is quite different from newly-amended Claim 21, which recites, in part, "the first flanges aligned with the elongated body portions and extending [[away]] substantially perpendicular from the plane of separation of the strips" [amendatory markings shown], with similar amendments to independent Claim 33. It is noted that the amendment from

the language “extending away” to “extending substantially perpendicular” is meant for clarity. However, the language regarding the alignment of the flanges clearly distinguishes over the Ausnit ‘373 reference, either alone or in combination with the cited secondary prior art references.

It is therefore respectfully submitted that all of the above-identified rejections are overcome.

For all of the reasons above, it is respectfully submitted that all of the presently pending claims are in immediate condition for allowance. The Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the rejections of the claims, to enter the amendment, to allow the claims, and to pass this application to early issue.

Respectfully submitted,

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